

What the Water Gave Me

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**\*\*\_You can't keep a good Winchester down\_\*\*\*\*. Warnings: alcohol abuse, psychological horror, death.\*\***

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**\*\*What the Water Gave Me\*\***

**\*\*\_"Lay me down, let the only sound be the overflow, pockets full of stones" - "What the Water Gave Me", Florence + The Machine\_\*\***

Dean wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand and sighed. He'd wiped the floor of the bunker until - while he might still not want to actually eat off it - it did almost sparkle. He stowed the mop and tipped the bucket away, his thoughts lost in the dark swirl of the water as it disappeared down the drain.

Hearing the familiar grinding-metal noise of the bunker's door, he made his way back out to the entrance, taking care to avoid the still damp patches. He groaned aloud as he recognized the trail of muddy boot prints that led down the long, gloomy corridors.

So Sammy was back again and, as usual, he hadn't the wherewithal to wipe his feet. Dean bit his lip, things were tense between them; they had been for a little while now. He decided to give his brother a free pass, but next time, they'd be having some serious

words.

Sighing, he made his way back to the kitchen to collect the mop. He reckoned that he might as well grab a beer or three while he was there.

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Dean blinked himself awake and for one, all-too-brief, perfect moment wondered where he was. His brain slowly lurched back into gear as he realized he was sprawled half-on half-off the sofa. His head throbbed more than a little, which, given his tolerances, meant he'd drunk a shit-load of whiskey the night before. Or this morning.  
\_Whatever\_.

He stumbled up and to his feet, only to stumble over something. He cursed long and loud, clutching at his foot and the immense pain that was his stubbed toe. \_That was one damn heavy bottle\_.

Rubbing his eyes, he sluggishly recognized it wasn't an empty whisky bottle. Instead, the offending item was a fist-sized, gray rock that squatted incongruously by the side of the couch. He lifted it up and turned it in his hands, noting it was slightly damp.

He observed the whiskey bottle (he'd always had a keen eye for booze), screwcap secured, had been set down on the table on the far side of the room. He looked back down at the rock in his hand. \_Ah, so it's a calling card then\_. He rubbed his hand back and forth across the stone; it had a pleasing smoothness and a good heft to it. He idly contemplated hurling it across the room in a fit of pique, but decided at the last instant that it wasn't worth the noise and mess. \_Definitely not the noise\_, he thought, rubbing at his head.

\_Hair of the dog\_, he decided as he retrieved the bottle, unscrewed the lid and lifted it to his lips.

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They'd been avoiding one another, but he decided to take a break from the never-ending cleaning and look in on his brother.

Cautiously-so as not to make a sound-he pushed open the door, wrinkling his nose at the musty smell. The lack of windows for fresh air was just one of the disadvantages of living underground. Maybe later he would make sure to leave the door propped open and let the room air. But for now he just wanted to reassure himself with his own eyes that Sam was back. All his life they'd shared a room and he'd always taken comfort from the great lug, whether it was his kicking feet, habit of stealing the covers, or even just the constant background soundtrack of his gentle snoring. For now it was enough to note the silent sprawled bulk across the bed.

He sighed. They hadn't spoken for days. Dean knew he was in the wrong, but he just couldn't help himself. It wasn't enough.

\_Just one small drink, then\_, he resolved.

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The stones became a regular thing for them. Dean would put them back, but each morning, there they'd be; still wet and slick from the river that ran out back of the bunker. It was a nice spot, picturesque and always a favorite of Sammy's. A couple of times they'd sat out there for hours, just staring up at the stars and remembering simple, if only relatively less stressful, times. Dean had once joked that with some decking and a hot tub it would be perfect, but he knew given his luck and lifestyle choices the chance would be he'd wake up drowned in the damn thing.

Was it a game? It didn't seem so. Rocks, rocks, everywhere, every time he awoke, like silent, staring sentinels. Watching. Judging. Silently accusing.

He nudged one desultorily with his booted foot. He supposed they were at least a type of communication. I'm still here and I'm watching over you. Perhaps they could even be considered the Winchester equivalent of an olive branch? Who was forgiving who, though? Dean wondered. Or was it whom? Sam would have known, he thought gloomily.

Time for a drink, he concluded. He'd not been grocery shopping for weeks, but he was sure they had a half bottle of vodka in the freezer.

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The distant hammering at the bunker's entrance woke him from confused and fragmented dreams of deep rivers swollen with dark waters and heavy burdens, a cry still perched on his lips. He rubbed at his sleep-encrusted eyes and wondered if he'd been screaming in his sleep again. Not that there was anyone here that would be willing and able to wake him from them.

Oh yes, the pounding was at the door and not in his head. Well, maybe a little of both; it had been nearly a full bottle after all.

"What d'ya want?" he shouted as he threw open the door, wincing at the shrill, metallic screeching of its hinges.

Castiel took a hasty step back under the barrage of the angry onslaught. His face twisted in a terrifying grimace that was a mix of concern and unwanted sympathy. Dean almost laughed; poor, useless, human Cas.

"I came as soon as I heard," said the former angel. "Why didn't you call me?"

Dean turned and stumbled back into the bunker. "Wipe your feet if you're coming in," he growled over one shoulder

Castiel coughed. "It reeks in here," he gasped, without really thinking, before he decided to prop the door open with a discarded stone.

"I've spent all week cleaning," muttered Dean, his tone defensive, while he rubbed over and over at his chapped hands.

"So I see," replied Castiel, as he, much to Dean's chagrin, noticed

the broken salt-lines and scored-through devil's traps.

Dean wandered aimlessly into the depths of the bunker, Castiel blindly following after him as had always been his way, but they still ended up outside the door where Dean \_always\_ ended up.

"Where is he?" Castiel choked out, although it wasn't clear if that was from the stench or just relief at finding nothing.

Dean looked away, he couldn't bear the sight of tears; there had been enough spilt water here already. He didn't need to listen to the rest of Castiel's words either, they, like everything the former angel did, were relentless in their logic. \_But they were wrong!\_

"He always liked it by the river..." explained Dean. He wiped his eyes. \_Dammit, he'd promised himself not to cry\_, but Castiel insisted on gazing at him with those stupid, limpid, uncomprehending eyes. "But no matter how much I weigh him down, he always comes back to me."

"You were never a burden-" Castiel started, misunderstanding, before he paled and turned at the sound of the shuffling, sodden footsteps coming up behind him.

"He always comes back," Dean smiled.

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\*\*\_"Cause they took your loved ones, but returned them in exchange for you.

>But would you have it any other way? Would you have it any other way?<br>You couldn't have it any other way" \_\*\*

\*\*\_- "What the Water Gave Me", Florence + The Machine\_\*\*

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